

THIRD SECTOR AND GREEN PRODUCTS: Driving public policies and economic development.

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Agradecimento à orgão de fomento:

Este estudo foi financiado em parte pela Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES).

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INTRODUCTION

The insertion of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and non-profit civil associations in civil society aims to drive the quality of life of various communities, to monitor companies, to act as a catalyst for information and to promote discussions on laws and public policies which benefit the minorities with less political influence (Ariztía et al., 2014; Gunay & Gunay, 2009). NGOs, associations, and foundations focused on environmental preservation are promoting public awareness about production and consumption to reduce the environmental impact and improve the living conditions of communities (Lorek & Spangenberg, 2014). Among these organizations' actions, we highlight their participation in the elaboration of public policies in favor of the environment (Atack, 1999; Reynolds, 2004; Seyfang, 2006), the mobilization of civil society (Ariztía et al., 2014; Rocha, Burlandy, & Maluf, 2012), as well as the organization of conferences to discuss relevant issues related to sustainability (Berlin, 2009). Furthermore, the NGOs have been driving the demand for a green product (Kong, Salzmann, Steger, & Ionescu-Somers, 2002), acting in the organic agriculture regulation, and the creation of organic fairs (Blanc, 2009).

Green products are those that have a lower impact on the environment and are less harmful to human health. It can be formed from recycled components, manufactured in a way that requires less energy and delivered to the market using less packaging compared to traditional products (Chen & Chang, 2013; Lin & Chang, 2012). It is observed, too, the emphasis on organic products. They can be classified as a green product for having as principles the non-aggression to the environment, the sustainable development, and the insertion of green practices in their production (Amekawa, 2011; Hamwey, Pacini, & Assunção, 2013; Sandhu, Wratten, & Cullen, 2010). The production of organic products respects rural cultures, acts on social inclusion and uses practices that aim at improving the quality of life of those who produce and consumes those products (Caporal & Costabeber, 2004; Martins, Camargo Filho, & Bueno, 2006; Schmidt & Wilson, 2001).

Despite some efforts by NGOs, associations, and foundations to promote sustainable development, are still observed research gaps in the literature. We highlight the following: (1) The need to explore global issues in environmental, social and economic fields for a transition to a more sustainable future, emphasized at the General Assembly of the United Nations on 2015 (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2016; Kim & Bosselmann, 2015; Wildschut, 2016); (2) Research sustainable production practices in countries where social transformations occur rapidly and where the agribusiness, although economically relevant, has been questioned because of the lack of respect for environmental sustainability (Blanc, 2009); (3) Investigate how business management that has a focus on sustainability happens, not only economically, but also in environmental and social aspects (Lankoski, 2016); (4) Identify gains in waste reduction, share and resources reuse with the geographical proximity of companies (Lange, 2016); (5) Provide support for public policies formulation that addresses the shortcomings of current policies based on vague documents and projects that delay effective change to sustainable production in order to promote sustainable development (Fox & Stoett, 2016; Loiseau et al., 2016; Mattsson, 2016); and (6) Analyze impacts related to profound changes in production and consumption patterns arising from industrial ecology and ecological economy (Loiseau et al., 2016).

Considering the rapid social transformations in countries where agribusiness has relevant

participation in the economy (Blanc, 2009), the need for environmental preservation actions (Kong et al., 2002; Rajarajeswari, 2013) supported by public policies that promote sustainable development (Fox & Stoett, 2016; Loiseau et al., 2016; Mattsson, 2016), the research question is: What actions NGOs, associations, and foundations focused on sustainability, with emphasis on green products, adopt to promote public policies and sustainable economic development? Thus, this paper aims to analyze the actions that NGOs, associations, and foundations focused on sustainability, with emphasis on green products, adopt to promote public policies and sustainable economic development. Therefore, a field study was carried out with NGOs, foundations, and associations in Southern Brazil.

Brazil is considered the 65th largest economy in the world (Portal Brasil, 2019), and the South region contributed with 16% of the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 2019 (IBGE, 2019). It is currently representing the third region with the highest contribution to the national GDP (Portal Brasil, 2019). According to Portal Brasil (2019), agribusiness had a 21,4% share of the national economic GDP. In this context, we find organic agriculture with an average annual growth in retail sales of organic products in the world was over 11% in the period from 2000 to 2017 (IFOAM, 2019). Brazil also stands out as one of the world's largest producers of organic products. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Supply (MAPA), the area occupied with organic production grows, on average, 2% per year in the country. In 2018, Brazil had more than 22 thousand certified organic production units. The billing projection, in 2018, was R \$ 4 billion. The calculations are based on the increase in exports, the emergence of new companies, and the variety of products launched periodically (ORGANIS, 2018). In this context, the South Region of the country has more than six thousand producers, followed by the Southeast and Northeast regions, with around four thousand producers. The states that stand out in the number of producers are Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, Santa Catarina, Pará, Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, Ceará, and Bahia (MAPA, 2019). Rio Grande do Sul follows the national movement with 4.1 thousand (18%) organic production units in Brazil. The state still has 3,300 certified Brazilian producers (15%). In the last seven years, the expansion reached 183% in the number of units and 280% in the registered farmers. In Brazil, there is a new emerging middle class avid for consumption. The inclusion of this slice of the consumer market population can affect the environment, causing severe environmental impacts (Ariztía et al., 2014).

This research intends to contribute academically advancing in the discussions about how NGOs, associations, and foundations are contributing to the development of public policies to address current policy failures, as highlighted previously (Fox & Stoett, 2016; Loiseau et al., 2016; Mattsson, 2016). And how they assessed economic development to explore economic issues for more sustainable production, as discussed and highlighted at the UN General Assembly in 2015 (Kim & Bosselmann, 2015).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

NGOs, foundations, and associations focused on environmental sustainability

NGOs are non-governmental organizations that, in Brazil, are characterized by not being profitable, in other words, not aimed at generating profit. They protect civil society's rights, environmental preservation, and improving quality of life, the aid of in the political formation, assistance to people affected by disasters, and actions to certify green products, among other activities. In Brazil, the NGOs are composed of a legal form of associations and foundations, with a hierarchy level and National Cadastre of Legal Entities (CNPJ) (Atack, 1999; Costa & Visconti, 2001; IPB, 2013; Portal Terceiro Setor, 2013).

Association, according to the Civil Code, article 53, is the "union of persons for noneconomic

purposes." However, the association can perform economic activities, if during its formation is characterized for this purpose. Association is also a union of two or more people, with common goals, such as sustainable development or actions aimed at protecting the environment and developing green products (Brasil, 2002; IPB, 2013).

On the other hand, foundations are usually formed for a definite purpose, even if they are not for profit. The founder destines a free asset, which will be used for the final objective in which the foundation intends to act. The association's main difference is that the association focuses on the individual and the foundation on the patrimony (Costa & Visconti, 2001; IPB, 2013).

Thus, NGOs, associations, and foundations in developed and developing countries play a role in influencing policy development and negotiation. In some cases, they act as a government advisor, providing technical reports, expert advice, and in other cases, a claimant of the population. The third sector also contributes to sustainable economic development, from approaching the farmer to the client, promoting problem-solving, helping to improve efficiency through collective actions, training, and the use of resources in a sustainable way (Avea et al., 2016; Buckley, Conner, Matts, & Hamm, 2013; Campos, 2008; Downie, 2014; Lund, 2013; Romero-Brito, Buckley, & Byrne, 2016).

In general, NGOs, associations, and foundations pursue social or environmental benefits. Their actions with civil society can provide innovative analyses, articulate the contribution of research institutions, and pilot-scale solutions that tend to influence the creation of the change of public policies.

Public Policies

In this study, we defined public policies as the field of knowledge that seeks to "put the government into action." These are sets of programs, actions and activities carried out by the State directly or indirectly, with the participation of public or private entities, which aim to guarantee a particular right of citizenship, in a diffuse way or for a specific social, cultural, ethnic or economic follow-up (Souza, 2006).

Global discussions about the environment were the forerunners of the insertion of environmental issues into Brazil's public policies and are associated with normative problems about the concept of legitimacy. In this way, NGOs and public agencies become partners in social and economic change (Atack, 1999). Korten (1987) points out that NGOs are classified by generations, focusing on developing sustainable systems regarding involvement in the institutional, social, and political context and participation in the process of policy formulation by governments and multilateral organizations. The NGO strategy is to seek changes in specific policies and institutions at the local, national, and global levels, and it is also a long-term political challenge (Berlin, 2009; Defra, 2003; Seyfang, 2006).

The expansion of organic products consumption in the countries is a way to reconcile the development of small-scale agriculture, the revitalization of rural communities and environmental protection, and the adoption of laws as a way to encourage organic farming, whether or not it benefits from organic certification (Blanc, 2009). In Brazil, the promotion of incentive laws for agroecological alternatives aims to provide new perspectives for workers in family agriculture, which in 2012 were primarily responsible for the production of food for Brazilian families, reaching 70% of food consumed in Brazil (Portal Brasil, 2013).

However, another important role is the certification standards for green products, which are carried out by the abroad by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). It generates efforts to define and apply quality certificates in products of an organic specification, ensuring industrialization and commercialization, in detriment of organic values (Raynolds, 2004).

Ariztía et al. (2014) highlight that a growing number of NGOs and consulting groups engaged in awareness-raising and promotion of sustainable consumption, helping small producers obtain certification for the marketing of green products. However, these actions have limited visibility, mainly because they were focused on a particular sector.

It is believed that the challenge is to create a new form of democratic participation through the organization of civil society and policy councils. Such engagement requires information, training, and posture. While councils provide space for political dialogue, they also need skills and knowledge that many representatives of Brazilian civil society organizations do not yet have, which provides environmentally degraded agriculture and little respect for environmental sustainability (Rocha et al., 2012).

Faced with this panorama, the principle of sustainability appears as a normative criterion for reconstructing the economic order as a condition for human survival and as a support for sustainable development, questioning the very basis of production.

Sustainable Economic Development

The environmental problem worsened at the end of the 20th century due to the intensification of industrialization and the expansion of human intervention in nature. This fact is easily verified by the evolution of air, water, and soil contamination as a result of the multiplication of ecological disasters, thus creating local public health and environmental crises for thousands of communities around the world (Benetti, Fiorentin & Toledo, 2012; Gavronski, 2012; Peng & Lin, 2008). According to the principles of the Brundtland report, sustainable development is based on the ability to achieve simultaneous environmental, social, and economic performance without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

In 1992 it took place the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro. In this event, several countries of the world agreed to Agenda 21, and a crucial need for sustainable development was recognized (Dernbach, 2003). In Agenda 21, the governments outlined a detailed program of actions to keep the world from the current unsustainable economic growth model. Therefore, they directed to activities that protect and renew the use of natural resources on which growth and development depend. These actions fields include: to protect the atmosphere; to combat deforestation, soil loss, and desertification; to prevent pollution of water and air; to halt the destruction of fish and promote the safe management of toxic wastes (ONUBR, 2017).

Thus, some authors understand sustainable development as a dynamic process that requires efforts to keep progressing over time. In this way, sustainable development can be considered a long-term goal achieved through the supply of people's basic needs and economic development (Dernbach, 2003; Stoddart, 2011). Therefore, sustainability is a way of thinking about a future in which environmental, social, and economic issues are in the balance and that development guarantees a better quality of life (Luken & Hesp, 2006; Marin, Dorobantu, Codreanu; & Mihaela, 2012).

Economic development based on sustainability involves financial, operational, and formative aspects. In this context, NGOs undertake operational initiatives aimed at welfare, rehabilitation, and restructuring for the less favored sector, working in a wide area for development and social change. They can be considered the complementary force of innovation for the country (Rajarajeswari, 2013). In projects that prioritize the valuation of the human being and are based on the development of the countries, certain aspects such as the need of the poor and the involvement in the economic and social life are prioritized. Thus, they are developed political and cultural processes and sustainable development projects

related to providing service, to improve the quality of life. These are offered in schools and training programs (Nikoi, 2008).

Sustainable economic development, also known as the "green economy," has been increasingly promoted as a form of social development (Rasmussen, 2012). According to Rasmussen (2012), the concept of a green economy is closely related to "sustainable development," but with some differences. "Green economy" reflects the growing concern for environmental well-being and population growth. Thus, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) defines the green economy as a result of improving human and social welfare about equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and scarcity (UNEP, 2011). In this type of economy, NGOs and foundations focused on green awareness to perform improvement projects for families, as well as the insertion of farmers into new production (Rasmussen, 2012).

One of the changes in economic growth is consumer requirements. Consumption patterns and consumer tastes have changed significantly, and there is a higher propensity for natural and organic food due to increased green consciousness (Chen, Chen, Xu, Liu, & Niu, 2017). Therefore, sustainable development encompasses the green economy, economic development, green products, and environmental and social aspects. The driving force of green products is to contribute to the well-being of the environment and society, resulting in a less environmental impact, corroborating the development of the green economy (Bhaskar, 2013; Tsai, Chuang, Chao, & Chang, 2012).

So, sustainable economic development takes into consideration the economic, social and environmental elements, as well as the aspects derived from green products for decision making, establishing policies that preserve the quality of agricultural development, economic and environmental protection (Albino, Balice, & Dangelico, 2009; Bhaskar, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

The research method used was the case study with a qualitative and exploratory/descriptive approach (Roesch, 1996; Voss, Tsikriktsis, & Frohlich, 2002; Yin, 2002). The case study is justified because the NGOs, associations, and foundations work in the regulation of green products, environmental sustainability, and are located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul (RS) with the greatest representativeness of producers of green products in Brazil.

Sample and Procedures of Data Collection

The sample and data collection were carried out in two steps: in the first step, we selected the NGOs from citations in articles and on sites such as (<http://abong.org.br/>). In the second step, we chose the associations, and foundations, from the statement of NGOs' interviewed, being the same in the State of RS. The selection organized in this way brought safety and integrity to the sample and allowed the concentration of research in RS. The intention was to have a better characterization of the actions of public policy and sustainable economic development in the region.

The two NGOs surveyed are characterized by being non-profit and being certifiers of green products in organic fairs in RS. The two associations are composed of farmers and are linked to NGOs, providing the development of their region and associates. The three foundations work in awareness campaigns and courses, aiming to contribute to sustainable and environmental development.

We conducted observations on websites and interviews with open questions, focused, and semi-structured for data collection. The observation strategy of NGOs, Associations, and Foundations' websites and the analysis of the interviews allowed the data triangulation. It was

thereby providing greater validity and reliability in data research (Mentzer & Flint, 1997). The study considered the script constructs derived from the literature review, developments being carried out in two subgroups: the public policies construct deployed in the development of public policies and regulations; the sustainable economic growth in performance and community.

The responsible for each institution answered the questions to understand how each element is identified and perceived by respondents. We transcribed the interviews, tabulated them, and organized them by constructs to facilitate data analysis and ensure legitimacy. For analysis of the results was used content analysis that, according to Bardin (2009), sought a better understanding of the interviews through the deepening of grammatical features that extract the most relevant aspects of the analysis of interviews and compared it with theory. Table 1 summarizes the respondents' information and materials and characterizes the NGOs, associations, and foundations surveyed.

Table 1: Characterization of NGOs, associations, and foundations

Classification	Function	Foundation date	Products	Number of participants
Association A	Assist producers in the production and development of new methods for pest control, inspection, incentives, and mobilization for organic fairs.	1998	Citrus and fresh fruits and vegetables.	Ten families, totalizing a cultivation area of approximately 200 hectares.
NGO B	Certify green products and products from associations and foundations that intend to market green products. Assist in the elaboration of public policies.	2000	Organic products; green products in general.	It is composed of twenty-six nucleus, which consists of associations, foundations, and entities.
Association C	Assist farmers and other producers, as well as mobilizing them for the green product fairs. Support their associates regarding the production process, issues related to public policies, and standardization.	1999	It is involved in the production of juices, grains, and cereals.	It is comprising twelve families.
Foundation D	Act in public awareness, to realize ecotourism and the production of green products, as well as to participate in fairs.	1989	Dairy production, green production courses, ecotourism, awareness activities.	It is comprising a family. However, it involves the region in their projects.
Foundation E	Act in public awareness, seek the well-being and to reduce consumption. Perform ecotourism, courses, and production of green products and eco-house.	2005	Organic production, greenhouse, design house, exchanges, and ecotourism.	It is composed of eighteen persons who act as educators and work in the NGO infrastructure.
NGO F	Act in the awareness of consumers and producers; Conduct campaigns with the community; Assist in the production of green products, and projects for the insertion of new families, as well as being	1986	Women insertion in the field, an inspection of organic fairs, courses for working with recycling, educational	Farming families benefited from the activities / Actions – 850, Associations - 30. However, there are still hundreds

	responsible for green product fairs.		programs, draft laws, greenhouse, and green design.	of people of civil society who are benefited.
Foundation G	Act with awareness projects and community integration with a vision of sustainability and rehabilitation of areas. Carry out activities in the community about to use medicinal herbs and different materials, causing less damage to the environment.	1987	Awareness lectures, Activities with the fauna and flora, soil recovery projects, and sales of organic products.	Approximately ten people work in the foundation. However, the number of individuals benefited by this job is not reported due to being large numbers.

RESULTS

This section presents results from the research with NGOs, associations, and foundations. To support the research data, we analyzed the results from the perspective of the constructs listed in the conceptual framework: Public Policies and Sustainable Economic Development.

Public policies

This topic summarizes the results of involvement and actions in public policies, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of results – Public Policies

Public policy	Associations A and C	NGOs B and F	Foundations D, E, and G
Political Development	They participate in policymaking at the national level, through joint action with NGOs.	They assist in the drafting of laws/policies at the municipal, state, and national levels. These laws protect producers of green products from traditional products and encourage the consumption of green products.	Foundations D and E do not participate in public policy development and do not have a position before the government. However, Foundation G acts in public policy development. This action is concentrated in a foundation arm located outside the RS.
Regulations	Members are certified and are visited by other certificates monthly. Every six months, the NGO supervisors evaluate the product offered, the production process, and the practices used to prepare it.	NGOs B and F use the presented method to evaluate certificates, although they did not submit the procedures that the documents must comply with to obtain the certification. However, they claim to follow the same standards of foreign certifiers.	The foundations D and G are certificates and are visited by other certificates monthly. Every six months, the NGO supervisors evaluate the product offered, the production process, and the practices used to prepare it.

The NGO B's respondent mentioned some examples of participation in the induction of public policies, among which are mentioned: "fight for the adoption of the pesticides law," "alternative technologies design," "promotion of regional and national meetings of alternative agriculture." For the NGO F respondent, the new agroecology law is a breakthrough for organic farming. This advance was only possible thanks to the joining of forces with other

foundations, associations, and NGOs. The approval of this law helped increase the NGO's credibility for consumers and farmers in carrying out the certification of green products.

The foundation D' respondent does not participate in the elaboration of laws. However, it advises the Verde Sinos project, together with the Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Enterprise (EMATER), in the region.

The respondents commented that they avoid confrontations with public bodies because they use their image against non-green consumers and because such conflicts generate detrition and more imposition on the part of the leaders in complying with their requests.

Regulatory actions and laws to encourage and protect the development of green products start at the local level, expanding to the next regions in search of support, reaching the state, and finally, the national level. Thus the respondents exchange knowledge through democratic participation, which generates moments for information exchange, contributing to the development of skills needed in councils.

Sustainable Economic Development

This topic summarizes the results of involvement and actions in sustainable economic development, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of results – Sustainable Economic Development

Sustainable Economic Development	Associations A and C	NGOs B and F	Foundations D, E, and G
Performance	They do not research to assess the economic development of the region where they operate. However, conduct annual surveys with members, to detect how much they have grown in the year and to carry out prospects for the next year.	NGO B does not carry out research to check the economic development of the regions where it operates. The NGO F conducts empirical research with the community.	Foundations do not research to assess the region's economic development and do not use research provided by city halls to compare their economic development.
Community	The associations do not realize financial investments. However, they invest in the expansion of the productive areas, developing new products, lectures, and trips to associates.	NGOs B and F make investments from external funding. These resources are intended, in part, to the community. However, the NGO F does not report the means of raising funds.	Foundations D and G hold financial investments in the institution to enhance and further diversify its field, indirectly contributing to society.

The NGO B obtains external funds from the development of projects for specific actions and activities, through the payment of the annuity by the associated families, contributions from entities related to the network and sponsorships. With capital derived from these sources, the NGO can contribute to the poor by providing them with a better quality of life and more significant space to express themselves.

Foundation E does not conduct research or use research provided to evaluate sustainable economic development. It says that such research has no relation to sustainable economic development due to divergence in the measurement parameters adopted by foundations. Thus, the Foundation emphasizes that there is a long way to go and that these change of settings will generate major conflicts with governments and organizations, due to the way they manage

and account development. They still do not hold substantial investments because they do not want to go into debt and be "doomed" to high workloads. They want to live well with life and the spirit world.

The NGO F conducts empirical research, which includes an analysis of billings and profits in recent years and assesses the need to increase production and NGO action on new fronts or larger geographic areas. They perform financial investment by the agroecological community to increase the production of green products, improving the quality of life, well-being providing, insert the idea of sustainable development and contribution to decision-making.

However, most respondents reinvest in the development of productive areas, technology, new product development, lectures, and travel to improve techniques.

DISCUSSION

NGOs based on the principle of legitimacy (see, Atack, 1999) and its classification (see, e.g., Berlin, 2009; Seyfang, 2006; Korten, 1987), are legitimized in sustainable development as well as the associations and foundations researched. They are involved in the formulation of policies, in the development of farmers, committed to environmental awareness, the development of new products, and healthy consumption. Also, NGOs regulate organic fairs, eco house courses, green design, and help in the insertion of new producers in the production of green products.

For the NGOs researched, the adoption of laws to encourage agroecology, as pointed out by Blanc (2009), was a significant step forward, which gave them credibility with producers and society. Such reliability allowed the NGOs to transmit more security to the community, from their certifier's role, in addition to giving greater respect to the certificates. The certification has a priority to generate value for the organic product for marketing, as highlighted by Reynolds (2004), which was one of the activities carried out by the NGOs. These activities aim at guaranteeing quality, the integrity of the product, and generation of value for certified products, but complying with IFOAM certification standards.

NGO F is concerned about the problem arising from market exclusion. Thanks to this concern, it provides space at its fair for farmers transitioning from traditional products to organic products, intending to cover this market niche with support actions within its property. However, those respondents do not carry out the insertion of new producers of green products due to the lack of structure and the difficulties faced by the market.

However, about regard to sustainable economic development, we can highlight the position of Foundation E. It emphasizes that what is known of economic growth is contrary to sustainable economic development. This positioning is in line with Rasmussen's (2012) ideas when he defines what a green economy is, and according to UNEP (2011), which exposes the green economy as a result of improving human well-being and to significantly reduce environmental risks and ecological scarcity.

In general terms, none of the interviewees carry out research to evaluate the economic development of the region, nor do they make financial investments in the communities. However, they take actions to meet the needs of the less favored population, contributing to their quality of life. These actions corroborate the studies by Rajarajeswari (2013) and Nikoi (2008) regarding initiatives aimed at the well-being, development, and social change, as well as the fact of being engaged in sustainable development and contributing to the decision making.

The respondents highlight consumers as a critical element for behavior change and the insertion of new adepts in the productive part. They would reinforce the idea that green consumption is not quick fashion, but something that came to stay and improve the quality of life and the way the environment is seen. These positionings converge with the idea presented

by Seyfang (2006) that the consumer is the central element for sustainable change, besides being regularly urged to do his part to “save the planet” through the purchase of recycled products and their requirement for products with little environmental aggression in their production.

In this way, this paper contributes by showing that for the development of public policies, it is necessary the interaction between NGOs, associations, and foundations, emerging from the local to the national level, which has brought them credibility to producers, consumers, and the market. Also, the actors’ interaction contributes to concise draft laws, which guarantees functionality, safety for producers and consumers, and the correct degrees of vigor, that is, without a high level of bureaucratization.

Concerning economic development, we concluded that the NGOs, associations, and foundations researched are focused on sustainable economic development, thus basing their actions on the promotion of a green economy and culture. The efforts are focused on the development and appreciation of the people, through courses and trips to improve techniques. However, it is essential that NGOs, associations, and foundations get closer to consumers and understand the priorities, interests, and information they need, to reduce the barriers and obstacles to the entry of new producers.

CONCLUSION

This research analyzed the actions that NGOs, associations, and foundations focused on sustainability, with emphasis on green products, adopt to promote public policies and sustainable economic development. We conducted this study with NGOs, associations, and foundations located in the state of RS, using a convenience sample, predominantly by regulators, producers, and green product promoters.

Thus, this study made it possible to identify that the respondents contribute to the elaboration of laws and working in partnership with the public agencies in the search for incentives for green products and the formulation of environmental protection laws. In addition to public policy actions, NGOs, associations, and foundations are committed to raising public awareness of environmental aspects and healthy food consumption, regulating organic fairs, and incorporating new producers into organic production.

Regarding sustainable economic development, we can observe divergence of ideas among the respondents about how to measure their progress and concern the ways of investing for economic growth. In this way, the actions taken for sustainable economic development are only in the scope of providing travel and courses for the improvement of sustainable practices. However, future studies could involve replicating the same research in other regions of Brazil to generate a map of how NGOs, associations, and foundations are being carried out. This map could be used by governments to develop public laws more assertive to environmental needs, use public resources better, raise public awareness, and broaden the understanding that green products are among the main pillars to reach sustainable development.

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